



Outsiders have no tool to fix Syria: Opposing view

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Latest violence, though tragic, doesn't directly threaten USA.

The desire to "do something" in Syria is understandable. The gut-wrenching images of the dead, including the young, have rocketed around the world. To casual observers, it seems obvious that a country as rich and militarily powerful as the United States must be able to stop the violence.

But the truth is that not even the United States can solve Syria's problems.

The deeply dysfunctional Syrian state is not something outsiders have the tools to repair. Cruise missiles launched from ships and submarines won't persuade the divided Syrian opposition to unite around a common goal, nor are they likely to cause President Bashar Assad's supporters to capitulate and throw in their lot with the rebels.

But such strikes will result in additional death and destruction on the ground. The violence will end only when the warring factions within Syria tire of the struggle and are willing to compromise for peace. That is unlikely to happen any time soon, with or without U.S. involvement.

U.S. strikes will do nothing to solve the supposed credibility problem President Obama created by stating that use of chemical weapons was a "red line." Instead, by involving the United States in a war without winning it, they will worsen the problem.

The American public remains strongly opposed to military intervention of any type, even if it is proven that Assad has used chemical weapons. To be sure, this reflects war weariness after Iraq and Afghanistan. But that wariness is also a hard-earned lesson of those wars: The violence within Syria, while tragic, does not directly threaten U.S. national security.

This month, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Martin Dempsey told ABC that "the application of force rarely produces and, in fact, maybe never produces, the outcome that we seek." More recently, Dempsey explained that military leaders were "realistic about the cost we incur in blood and treasure when we apply the military instrument of national power, and ... pragmatic about the limits of military force."

While the president no doubt has many people advising him to intervene, he should listen to his senior military adviser and the American people, and keep U.S. military personnel focused on those essential missions that they can accomplish, and that might actually advance U.S. security.

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